

1729
(1)
A Modest Vindication of Mr. Setons Address and Petition, To his Majesties High Commissioner, from the Cavils and Misconstructions of
Anonymus

John Carter Brown
Library

I Am not at leisure to trifle with the Author of the perplexed and tedious Reflections on my short Sermon in behalf of Charity, and my most earnest and humble Petition for a Brotherly Conference. I have studied our SAVIOUR's Sermon on the Mount, and I hope I have profited something at His School, who when He was Reviled, Reviled not again, my Intention is not to amuse the World with Parades, unbecoming a Churchman, nor to do any thing that may purchase me the Character of a *Sounding Brass*, or *Tinkling Cymbal*: I have read the Causes of the decay of Christian Piety, and other good Books written in good Language, but I was never at *Billings-gate*, nor am I versed in its rude Dialect: I know how *Haman* pleaded against the *Jews*, and the Fauning Orator *Tertullus*, against the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, the Rapturous Encomiast on Heavenly Charity; I know also how the *Arch-Angel* managed the Contraversie betwixt him and a very ill Competitor: But I never thought it worth my while, to bestow spare hours on such trash & dirty pamphlets, as the *Presbyterian Eloquence*, and the *Wicked Answers* to it.

I have long been one of these Mourners who bewail the sad State of Christendom, and the miserable Divisions of this Kingdom in particular, and the fierce Animosities among Us Churchmen, which make the *Atheist* flourish, the *Theist* and *Soci-nian* lift up his Head, and the *Romish Missionary* bless himself with swelling Hopes and Triumph in Secret, and warm himself at the fire kindled in Our Bowels.

I have been sometime in this Place, at the desire of Persons of different Ranks and Characters, who are enclined to hope, that as upon more Occasions than one, I have conform to my Slender Capacity, done some little Services to my King, Countrey, and Holy Religion, so I might by GOD's Blessing prove Instrumental at this Season, to beget a good Understanding betwixt contending Parties.

I thank GOD for it, I have hitherto Laboured with some good Success, I find diverse Pious and Learned Men amongst my *Presbyterian* Brethren, I find fellow Mourners for the Distresses of Our Zion, I find his Grace my Lord Commissioner, deserves higher Characters than all the Eloquence I could command, has as yet given him, I find he is not to be taught Manners by the Author of the Reflections, and that he does not think it unworthy of his while, or Serious Thoughts, amidst all the important Cares he is loaden with, to listen to the Friendly and privat Conferences of Men of different Perswasions in little Matters; The King himself finds Leisure & Inclination, amidst the rugged Toils of Warr, to regrant Our unkindly and unseasonable Contentions, and he wishes them at an end; And there are more of his chief Ministers than one, who design to serve GOD Faithfully, and their Royal Master, and their afflicted Countrey therein.

I want not overtures of Peace and Union, such as the Generality of this Nation, or at least, those whose Hearts GOD hath touched, shall in time be well pleased with; I seek Peace and pursue it, and there are on both sides, who join cordially their Helping Hands to me, I expect a fair Conference and a good Issue through the Blessing of GOD on it, and I Labour without Weariness to have all things Right disposed to that Effect; And I will not be interrupted by the nameless Scribler, but I can and will Pray heartily, That GOD may inspire him with a more Christian and Charitable Temper.

If at a more Seasonable Juncture, It shall be found expedient to vindicate my self and my Brethren, as to our past conduct in some remarkable steps of dubious construction, the little Pen that has been employed sometimes in harder busieness, may by the aid of Divine Grace, be able to give the world Satisfactory accounts in these and other Matters, not fit to be touched at this occasion.

Thus far I had Written upon sight, and with some tender Sense of unkind usage but upon second thoughts, and finding I had one spare Hour more at my disposal and being such a Penitent as I ought to be. For the fuller satisfaction of the Author and others, I think fit to add in the following Paragraphs, a particular Confession of the Sins that I and those of my Perswasion are Tashed with, or (if so you please to Construct it) to lay aside the Authors high Sounding Envelop, and fast of General words, and the Stage and Ice, and all false Logick, and Erring Divinations and to set His Church in a true Light, and the Society that prove Schismatick to it.

1^{mo}. To dispose the most Opinionative Readers to hearken without prejudice to the Contents of my Adress and Petition when published, and to speak Truth of myself and my Brethren, I Denominate us well Affected to the Peace of this Church. But I have cry'd aloud, and not spared, I have lifted up my Voice like a Trumpet, and declaimed against the Sins of GOD's People, and his Select Office-Bearers, and that is to have Jacob's Voice, and Esau's rough Hands.

2^{do}. I Adorned my Paper with some Scriptural Eloquence; But as Bishop Stillingfleet in the Preface to his *Irænicum*, so I unluckily named *Procrustes*, whose Character every one is not acquainted with, and that smelled too rankly of the Stage, and of unsanctified Heathen Learning; and after such Language of *Ashdod*, no Wise or Good Man could take me to be a Minister of the Gospel.

3^{io}. With some Emotion of Mind, and a Passionate Zeal, I have Commended the Beauty of Charity, and Magnified her as a Divine Physician, and I thought I had Saint Paul on my side, but that was only a fancy.

4^{to}. Charity is a Stranger to the World, or she is not, if she be, I was a Fool to speak Good of her; For I might be sure to be beaten for my pains, if she be not there was neither Truth, Charity, nor wisdom in my Compliments.

5^{to}. To say, or so much as to insinuate that there is any Pride, or Partiality, or Malice amongst these Church-Men, who have the Government now Lodged in their Hands, or that there are any Errors in their Conduct, prejudicial to Peace and Unity is a false assertion, and to tell them of it openly, who can resent to purpose, is no Wisdom.

6^{to}. Though I have often expostulated in private, with warm men on both sides concerning the mischief that Springs from our Divisions, though some Mans Memory more Charitable than the Authors, may be so kind as to remember that in the Committee at *Aberdeen*, Anno 1694, I earnestly pressed a Friendly conference with some of the Members, telling them in Express words, that the Devil and the Jesuits had Triumphed too long in our Divisions, and that she was not the True Mother, who cryed to divide the living Child; And tho my serious Remonstrance was but little heeded: Yet it was Uncharitable in me to insinuate shrewd things of my Presbyterian Brethren, before I had admonished them privately.

7^{mo}. All these Episcopal Ministers who have been turned out since the Revolution, whither by the Violence of the Rabble, or by Church Judicatories, who can never pass an unjust Sentence, have but got the reward due to their Demerits.

8^{vo}. There was much *Atheism* and Irreligion in the late Reigns, and the Bishops and their Accomplices were the Chief occasions of it, but now the Golden Age is returned, and Sin and Satan are Banished at least out of every Presbyterian Congregation, and all this is owing to the present Church Government.

9^{no}. That all the Episcopal Ministers of Scotland were not at once Spewed out of their places for having complied with abominable Prelacy, the Mother and Nurse of all Wickedness, is a mighty courtesie in the present Church Rulers, tho some are apt to think that the greatest share of acknowledgements on this head is due to the Wisdom and Justice of King and Parliament, and to the Love of the people for their Ministry, and

and the great want to this hour of *jure* ³ *Presbyterians Qualified for the Sacred Function.*

10mo. Tho we be scarred by the Breath of angry Preachers in Face of Parliament, and elsewhere, tho we be Characterized as *Samaritans*, who have no Right to be Builders of the House of GOD, tho in places where we think the Gospel was preached with much Fervour and Purity, some have the Good manner and Charity to Pray that GOD may open Mens Eyes to see the difference betwixt those who feed the People with Husks, and such as now give them the true Bread of Life, who we deserve to be accursed from Christ if we ever did, or do Preach another Gospel than himself and his Apostles have taught us; Yet it is much to be wondered at, that all good and Peaceable Men amongst us, do not readily joyn a Society, which Entertain so hard impressions of the whole gang, as the Author terms it.

11mo. I must tell a peice of true History, Whatever Censure I may thereby incur, *Anno 1691*, when the Committee should have sitten at *Aberdeen*, & was hindred by a Rabble (to which we had no Accession directly or indirectly) the Ministers of that and other Provinces, were hugely Allarum'd by the Citation of no less then 30 Ministers at once, (Many whereof were eminent for Piety and Learning) To answer to invidious Unsubscribed Lybels: There was but little hope of Fair and Candid Proceeding from a Judicatorie so possessed with Prejudice, and therefore by way of *Self-Defence*, some expostulating Queries, were drawn up concerning the Committees Intrinsic Right over us as Ministers, that being it which they claimed to act by, and We being unsatisfied as to any Juridical Power they could pretend to, save what was derived from the State, a Protestation against the Intrinsic Power they laid claim to over Us their Brethren in the Ministry, was therefore drawn up, and an Appeal to the Kings Justice and Protection, imbodied therewith, tho not to be made use of till We had employed Our outmost Endeavours for a fair Accomodation.

Anno 1692. The King it seems was well informed of the State of this Church, and the Rights of its Standing Ministry, and like a true Father of his Faithfull Subjects, he was earnest to have Union amongst Us, and all our former differences ended and forgotten; And to that effect a Formula of Union was concerted, and by his Letters directed about one time to the Assembly and Us, he recommended Concord to both Parties. In obedience to his Royal Order, and out of a sincere Love to Peace, We delegated Commissioners to wait upon the Assembly, and We hoped for good Acceptance, and diverse Wise, and peaceable Members of it were for granting our Requests, but the warmer and greater part rejected both the Kings and Our Proposals, and to this day the Breach is kepted up (as We think) without any fault of Ours.

Anno 1694. While the Committee was coming to *Aberdeen*, We of that Diocess met among our selves, and considered what was fit to be done, we remembered what we had resolved upon. *Anno 1691*, And we thought our Circumstances still the same, and We therefore agreed upon the same Measures as formerly.

Last Session of Parliament we were called to account upon that head, and upon a very mistaken Supposition (proceeding from partial information) that We had been acted by a principle of Enmity to the Civil Government, and influenced by Great Men ill affected to it, two or three were censured, and the rest overlookt by the Mildness of the King and Parliament.

Tho this very faithfull Account of Matters of Fact may satisfie the Author and others (if they would be so charitable as to believe it) that we have not Almanack Consciences, yet he hath said so, and therefore it must be taken as granted.

12mo. To think that any private number of Church-men, can explain the Acts of their own Assembly, so as to satisfie the Scruples of such as demurr about them, or that they who can by a power delegated from it, receive any particular Minister, and instruct him sufficiently as to the Terms of Communion, can do the same to two or three Ministers at once; is a vain and impossible Supposition, and to demand a private Conference on the head in Presence of His Majestis High Commissioner, that he may make faithfull Report of it to the King, who hath loaded him with that kind of Care, amongst other weighty matters, is an impertinent and indiscreet Proposal; And let the World Judge of it.

13mo. vs

If at a more Seasonable Juncture, It shall be found expedient to vindicate my self and my Brethren, as to our past conduct in some remarkable steps of dubious construction, the little Pen that has been employed sometimes in harder busieness, may by the aid of Divine Grace, be able to give the world Satisfactory accounts in these and other Matters, not fit to be touched at this occasion.

Thus far I had Written upon sight, and with some tender Sense of unkind usage but upon second thoughts, and finding I had one spare Hour more at my disposal and being such a Penitent as I ought to be: For the fuller satisfaction of the Author and others, I think fit to add in the following Paragraphs, a particular Confession of the Sins that I and those of my Perswasion are Tashed with, or (if so you please to Construct it) to lay aside the Authors high Sounding Envelop, and fast of General words, and the Stage and Ice, and all false Logick, and Erring Divinations, and to set His Church in a true Light, and the Society that prove Schismatick to it.

1^{mo}. To dispose the most Opinionative Readers to hearken without prejudice to the Contents of my Adress and Petition when published, and to speak Truth of myself and my Brethren, I Denominate us well Affected to the Peace of this Church. But *I have cry'd aloud, and not spared, I have lifted up my Voice like a Trumpet*, and declaimed against the Sins of GOD's People, and his Select Office-Bearers, and that is to have *Jacob's Voice*, and *Esau's rough Hands*.

2^{do}. I Adorned my Paper with some Scriptural Eloquence; But as Bishop *Stillingfleet* in the Preface to his *Irænicum*, so I unluckily named *Procrustes*, whose Character every one is not acquainted with, and that smelled too rankly of the Stage, and of unsanctified Heathen Learning; and after such Language of *Ashdod*, no Wise or Good Man could take me to be a Minister of the Gospel.

3^{io}. With some Emotion of Mind, and a Passionate Zeal, I have Commended the Beauty of Charity, and Magnified her as a Divine Physician, and I thought I had Saint *Paul* on my side, but that was only a fancy.

4^{to}. Charity is a Stranger to the World, or she is not, if she be, I was a Fool to speak Good of her; For I might be sure to be beaten for my pains, if she be not there was neither Truth, Charity, nor wisdom in my Complaint.

5^{to}. To say, or so much as to insinuate that there is any Pride, or Partiality, or Malice amongst these Church-Men, who have the Government now Lodged in their Hands, or that there are any Errors in their Conduct, prejudicial to Peace and Unity is a false assertion, and to tell them of it openly, who can resent to purpose, is no Wisdom.

6^{to}. Though I have often expostulated in private, with warm men on both sides concerning the mischief that Springs from our Divisions, though some Mans Memory more Charitable than the Authors, may be so kind as to remember that in the Committee at *Aberdeen*, Anno 1694, I earnestly pressed a Friendly conference with some of the Members, telling them in Express words, that the Devil and the *Jesuits* had Triumphed too long in our Divisions, and that she was not the True Mother, who cryed to divide the living Child; And tho my serious Remonstrance was but little heeded: Yet it was Uncharitable in me to insinuate shrewd things of my *Presbyterian* Brethren, before I had admonished them privately.

7^{mo}. All these *Episcopal* Ministers who have been turned out since the Revolution, whither by the Violence of the Rabble, or by Church Judicatories, who can never pass an unjust Sentence, have but got the reward due to their Demerits.

8^{vo}. There was much *Atheism* and Irreligion in the late Reigns, and the Bishops and their Accomplices were the Chief occasions of it, but now the Golden Age is returned, and Sin and Satan are Banished at least out of every *Presbyterian* Congregation, and all this is owing to the present Church Government.

9^{no}. That all the *Episcopal* Ministers of *Scotland* were not at once Spewed out of their places for having complied with abominable *Prelacy*, the Mother and Nurse of all Wickedness, is a mighty courtesie in the present Church Rulers, tho some are apt to think that the greatest share of acknowledgements on this head is due to the Wisdom and Justice of King and Parliament, and to the Love of the people for their Ministry.

and the great want to this hour of *jure* ^(3) *Presbyterians Qualified for the Sacred Function.*

10mo. Tho we be scarred by the Breath of angry Preachers in Face of Parliament, and elsewhere, tho we be Characterized as *Samaritans*, who have no Right to be Builders of the House of GOD, tho in places where we think the Gospel was preached with much Fervour and Purity, some have the Good manner, and Charity to Pray that GOD may open Mens Eyes to see the difference betwixt those who feed the People with Husks, and such as now give them the true Bread of Life, who we deserve to be accursed from Christ if we ever did, or do Preach another Gospel than himself and his Apostles have taught us; Yet it is much to be wondered at, that all good and Peaceable Men amongst us, do not readily joyne a Society, which Entertain so hard impressions of the whole gang, as the Author terms it.

11mo. I must tell a peice of true History, Whatever Censure I may thereby incur, *Anno 1691*, when the Committee should have sitten at *Aberdeen*, & was hindred by a Rabble (to which we had no Accession directly or indirectly) the Ministers of that and other Provinces, were hugely Allarum'd by the Citation of no less then 30 Ministers at once, (Many whereof were eminent for Piety and Learning) To answer to invidious Unsubscribed Lybels : There was but little hope of Fair and Candid Proceeding from a Judicatorie so possessed with Prejudice, and therefore by way of *Self-Defence*, some expostulating Queries, were drawn up concerning the Committees Intrinsick Right over us as Ministers, that being it which they claimed to act by, and We being unsatisfied as to any Juridical Power they could pretend to, save what was derived from the State, a Protestation against the Intrinsick Power they laid claim to over Us their Brethren in the Ministry, was therefore drawn up, and an Appeal to the Kings Justice and Protection, imbodyed therewith, tho not to be made use of till We had employed Our outmost Endeavours for a fair Accomodation.

Anno 1692. The King it seems was well informed of the State of this Church, and the Rights of its Standing Ministry, and like a true Father of his Faithfull Subjects, he was earnest to have Union amongst Us, and all our former differences ended and forgotten; And to that effect a Formula of Union was concerted, and by his Letters directed about one time to the Assembly and Us, he recommended Concord to both Parties. In obedience to his Royal Order, and out of a sincere Love to Peace, We delegated Commissioners to wait upon the Assembly, and We hoped for good Acceptance, and diverse Wise, and peaceable Members of it were for granting our Requests, but the warmer and greater part rejected both the Kings and Our Proposals, and to this day the Breach is kept up (as We think) without any fault of Ours.

Anno 1694. While the Committee was coming to *Aberdeen*, We of that Diocess met amongst our selves, and considered what was fit to be done, we remembred what we had resolved upon. *Anno 1691*, And we thought our Circumstances still the same, and We therefore agreed upon the same Measures as formerly.

Last Session of Parliament we were called to account upon that head, and upon a very mistaken Supposition (proceeding from partial information) that We had been acted by a principle of Enmity to the Civil Government, and influenced by Great Men ill affected to it, two or three were censured, and the rest overlookt by the Mildness of the King and Parliament.

Tho this very faithfull Account of Matters of Fact may satisfie the Author and others (if they would be so charitable as to believe it) that we have not Almanack Consciences, yet he hath said so, and therefore it must be taken as granted.

12mo. To think that any privat number of Church-men, can explain the Acts of their own Assembly, so as to satisfie the Scruples of such as demurr about them, or that they who can by a power delegated from it, receive any particular Minister, and instruct him sufficiently as to the Terms of Communion, can do the same to two or three Ministers at once; is a vain and impossible Supposition, and to demand a private Conference on the head in Presence of His Majestis High Commissioner, that he may make faithfull Report of it to the King, who hath loaded him with that kind of Care, amongst other weighty matters, is an impertinent and indiscreet Proposal; And let the World Judge of it.

13mo. *Ans*

(4)
13^{mo}. Its acknowledged that there are but a small number of Constituents, who give encouragement to Mr. Seton, to take the Charge and trouble he is at, for getting Church differences equally settled; yet if there were a general Expectation of success in his peaceable designs, an encouragement from Authority for that effect, he durst undertake to get his Commission signed as yet with some hundreds of unexceptionable Ministers to their Moral and Intellectual Endowments, and already qualified or willing to qualify according to Law, and by many thousands of sincere Protestants Laymen in this Kingdom.

14th. Tho none of my Constituents ly under the Censure of the Church, save some called Intruders, and these meerly *eo nomine* and not for any Immoralities, and tho some of them were lybelled by, and appeared before the Committee, and nothing proven against them by the Witnesses, who were examined particularly enough, yet the Author sayes there appeared little difficulty in the probation, therefore I must acknowledge it, and all the world believe it to be true.

15th. Tho I seriously design a conference, and have very freely communicated to some new acquaintances of my Presbyterian Brethren (who are dear to me because of the true Gospel Spirit I see in them) a part of what, I have to say when that is agreed to; Yet because the Author cannot or will not think on a method how *jure divino*, and ambulatory men in point of Church Government, may live peaceably together, and jointly carry on the common ends of the Gospel without respect to difference of opinions or practices in matters supposed not to be essential to Religion; And because I mean not to come close to every point, untill I be perswaded that the Author speaks his Brethrens mind when he talks of such a conference as I have Petitioned for, as unpracticable, I must therefore be thought to design a parade only, and not be in good earnest.

16^{mo}. Tho I have Written an Apology in defence of the Civil Government, and that some of the highest Rank in the Kingdom know, and are pleased with what I have done, and tho some Men of the Authors good Acquaintance, have with much Bitterness more than once declaimed against my Constituents, and me for taking the Oaths by Law imposed; And tho I have not Written to London since I came to this place, nor mean to do so until I can give further accounts, yet the intallible Mr. of Divinations must be believed when he sayes I am ready enough to spurn at the Government with my heels, and that I sent my Address to London next Post after it was Printed.

To conclude, and to name no others whom I can prove to have been ill used by Presbyterian Indicators, if Dr. Sibbald at Aberdeen had been treated as Civilly by the Presbytrie, exercising a large Authority in that place, as by the Committee appointed for Visitation of Colledges, I should be the more ready to believe that the Author had a true kindness for true Ministers of the Gospel, tho they should never come to be of the same Judgement with himself as to the Government of the Church; And if the present Church Rulers had not spent more of their Zeal and Spirits on other matters of less importance, than on confronting *Atheism*, &c. And if he and some of his Brethren would condescend to explain in presence of Honourable Witnesses, a few dubious Clauses in the Acts settled by Authority in favour of the present Church Government, I should be the more easily induced to have favourable thoughts of the Authors bold appeal to GOD, Angels and Men, with which he takes confidence to end his Reflections.

(4)

13^{mo}. Its acknowledged that there are but a small number of Constituents, who give encouragement to Mr. Seton, to take the Charge and trouble he is at, for getting Church differences equally settled; yet if there were a general Expectation of success in his peaceable designs, an encouragement from Authority for that effect, he durst undertake to get his Commission signed as yet with some hundreds of unexceptionable Ministers to their Moral and Intellectual Endowments, and already qualified or willing to qualify according to Law, and by many thousands of sincere Protestant Laymen in this Kingdom.

14th. Tho none of my Constituents ly under the Censure of the Church, save some called Intruders, and these meerly *eo nomine* and not for any Immoralities, and tho some of them were lybelled by, and appeared before the Committee, and nothing proven against them by the Witnesses, who were examined particularly enough, yet the Author sayes there appeared little difficulty in the probation, therefore I must acknowledge it, and all the world believe it to be true.

15th. Tho I seriously design a conference, and have very freely communicated to some new acquaintances of my Presbyterian Brethren (who are dear to me because of the true Gospel Spirit I see in them) a part of what, I have to say when that is agreed to; Yet because the Author cannot or will not think on a method how *jure divino*, and ambulatory men in point of Church Government, may live peaceably together, and jointly carry on the common ends of the Gospel without respect to difference of opinions or practices in matters supposed not to be essential to Religion; And because I mean not to come close to every point, untill I be perswaded that the Author speaks his Brethrens mind when he talks of such a conference as I have Petitioned for, as unpracticable, I must therefore be thought to design a parade only, and not be in good earnest.

16^{mo}. Tho I have Written an Apology in defence of the Civil Government, and that some of the highest Rank in the Kingdom know, and are pleased with what I have done, and tho some Men of the Authors good Acquaintance, have with much Bitterness more than once declaimed against my Constituents, and me for taking the Oaths by Law imposed; And tho I have not Written to London since I came to this place, nor mean to do so until I can give further accounts, yet the intallible Mr. of Divinations must be believed when he sayes I am ready enough to spurn at the Government with my heels, and that I sent my Address to London next Post after it was Printed.

To conclude, and to name no others whom I can prove to have been ill used by Presbyterian Indicators, if Dr. Sibbald at Aberdeen had been treated as Civilly by the Presbytrie, exercising a large Authority in that place, as by the Committee appointed for Visitation of Colledges, I should be the more ready to believe that the Author had a true kindness for true Ministers of the Gospel, tho they should never come to be of the same Judgement with himself as to the Government of the Church; And if the present Church Rulers had not spent more of their Zeal and Spirits on other matters of less importance, than on confronting *Atheism*, &c. And if he and some of his Brethren would condescend to explain in presence of Honourable Witnesses, a few dubious Clauses in the Acts settled by Authority in favour of the present Church Government, I should be the more easily induced to have favourable thoughts of the Authors bold appeal to GOD, Angels and Men, with which he takes confidence to end his Reflections.



